A NATIONAL MONUMENT TO LAURA SECORD

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WHY IT SHOULD BE ERECTED.

AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE OF CANADA FROM THE LAURA SECORD NATIONAL MONUMENT COMMITTEE...

(Being a paper read by R. E. A. Land before the U. E. L. Association of Ontario, October 4th, 1901.)

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The Story of Laura Secord

And Other Canadian Reminiscences

BY

MRS. J. G. CURRIE

ST. CATHARINES

IN CLOTH, WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

$1.50 POSTPAID.

It is the author's intention to apply the proceeds of sales of her book after the cost of publication to the Monument Fund.

Copies may be obtained from Mrs. Currie.

Help for the Monument.

It is your Privilege to give it.

The Laura Secord National Monument Committee, created under the auspices of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Ontario, having taken in hand the erection of a National Monument at Queenston, Ontario, to the memory of

LAURA SECORD

The Heroine of Upper Canada

calls upon the Canadian people for help. Subscriptions can be handed to the authorized collectors or may be sent to

R. E. A. LAND, *President*,
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LAURA SECORD.

LAURA SECORD.

1 —**Who was she?** This Canadian heroine was the eldest daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Dewey Ingersoll, and was born at Great Barrington, Mass., in December, 1775. After the Revolution her father becoming dissatisfied with the vagaries of the new Government and attracted by Governor Simcoe's offer of lands, removed to Upper Canada, now Ontario, where he settled on the banks of the River La Tranche, now the Thames, on the site of the thriving town of Ingersoll, which was named after him by his eldest son, Charles.

The Ingersolls always were mighty men of valour. Charles, the brother of Laura, in company with the Honorable William Hamilton Merritt, raised a troop of Provincial Light Dragoons for the war of 1812. He fought at Queenston Heights and Lundy's Lane, served in the Royal Army until the end of the war, and received valuable grants of land from the Government for his loyal and patriotic services.

His eldest sister, Laura, also inherited the family spirit. After her arrival in Canada she married James Secord, U.E.L., a successful merchant of Queenston, where, after a residence for a time at the hamlet of St. Davids, they made their home. Laura Secord was a very prepossessing woman, and is said to have been one of the reigning belles in the early days of this Province.

2.—What did she do, and why is it proposed to erect a National Monument to her memory?

She was the heroine of Upper Canada: First of all, she saved her husband's life, and then she saved her country.

When the invader prepared to attack the Province in 1812, her husband, being of U.E. Loyalist stock and a strong patriot himself, joined the Militia. On the morning of October 13th, 1812, the Americans landed at Queenston. Then followed the great battle of Queenston Heights, in which, while our Commander Gen. Brock was slain, the invaders either surrendered or were driven into the river. From her little home, hard by, Laura Secord watched the vicissitudes of the fight which at one time favored the King's troops, at another the invader. On the morning of that day James Secord greatly distinguished himself, kept close to the General in the great charge, and after his fall was one of those who bore the remains from the field to the village, where Laura waited, and watched. He then rejoined the fighting line on the hill.

During the third and last attack on the afternoon of that eventful day James Secord was wounded. Word reaching Laura, she hastened to his side, arriving there just as three Yankee soldiers had raised their muskets to club her husband to death. Rushing in their midst and covering their victim with her person, she called upon them to kill her if they chose, but to spare her husband. The miscreants still

persisting in their dastardly attempt, she hung on to her wounded husband, protecting him as well as she could from their assaults until the arrival of Captain Wool, U.S.A., who arrested the cowards, had them sent to Lewiston under guard, and ordered a party to escort James and Laura Secord to their home in the village.

Thus by her truly Spartan devotion *Laura Secord saved her husband's life on the field of battle.*

And then she saved her country.

During the second invasion of the Niagara Peninsula by the Yankees under Gen. Dearborn in 1813, and after the battle of Stony Creek, in which two Yankee Generals, two field guns and over 100 prisoners were taken by General Vincent in a night attack, Lieut. James Fitzgibbon, Adjutant of the 49th Regiment, organized a Company of fifty Rangers, which with a few troopers of Merritt's Horse occupied De Cew's house as a depot for stores and also took up a commanding position at Beaver Dams on the heights overlooking the plain of Niagara, posts being established on the tops of the tallest trees on the hillside.

("The Fight in the Beechwoods," *Cruickshank.*)

("The War of 1812," *Coffin.*)

Later on this small force was strengthened by a party of Caughnawaga and Mohawk Indians under the command of Captains Ducharme and Kerr. From their vantage ground and point of outlook Fitzgibbon's men scouted the country and harrassed the enemy for miles and miles around.

To stop this annoying species of warfare, which was rapidly decimating his ranks, to destroy the depot of stores at De Cew's and to open a way to the West, Gen. Dearborn determined upon striking a blow. A column of 600 men with artillery under Col. Boerstler of the 14th U.S. Infantry was detailed to capture Fitzgibbon. At midnight on June 23rd, 1813, this column advanced from old Niagara to Queenston. Silence was enjoined upon those taking part in the movement, no fires nor lights were allowed, and pickets were stationed to prevent information being carried to the men on the hill. A sentry was placed at Laura Secord's own door.

There were those, however, who were straining eye and ear to catch the meaning of the expedition. This was soon ascertained. At Mr. Secord's at Queenston some American officers were billeted. With them Col. Boerstler dined on the 23rd of June. They talked freely of their plans and of the importance of securing Beaver Dams as a base of operations for the capture of Burlington Heights. "That position once taken," said Boerstler, "and Upper Canada is ours."

To this conversation, so pregnant with ill to her own and her country, Laura Secord was a quiet but eager listener. She consulted with her husband and they talked over a plan. Fitzgibbon must be warned of his danger. Somebody must speed to him at once. James Secord was unable, being still invalided from the wounds of Queenston Heights. Moreover, no man could pass the line of American sentries. There was no one else to send. Laura Secord must go herself.

And so this noble-hearted child of the Loyalists pre-

pared for her journey. Evading the sentry, she left her home before sunrise (the sun rises at 4.36 on June 24th,) reached St. David's as the sun rose, stopped a moment at the house of her sister-in-law to enquire after her brother Charles who was dangerously ill, and then pressed on. Avoiding the road on the left which led direct to her goal, as that would be guarded by American pickets, she struck through the woods to Shipman's Corners (now St. Catharines). During this season the whole country away from the roads was more or less under water. It was commonly said that there had not been such a rainy season for twenty-five years. Showers of greater or less magnitude had fallen nearly every day, and the roads were thoroughly saturated.

("The Fight in the Beechwoods," *Cruikshank.*)

To add to other perils, the woods were haunted with bands of Indians belonging to both armies, the howling of the wolf was heard in the distance, whilst more than once a rattlesnake glided from her path. Arriving at the Twelve Mile Creek, she crossed the stream at St. Catharines only to find that she had gone too far. She then re-crossed on the trunk of a fallen tree upon her hands and knees at a point near the Turney farm.*

(" Jubilee History of Thorold.")

Toiling up the steep bank beyond, she aroused a company of sleeping Indians who sprang to their feet with yells. It was now seven o'clock. After a parley she was conducted to Fitzgibbon who was informed of his danger.

*See next page.

THE PLACE WHERE SHE CROSSED.
From "Jubilee History of Thorold"
By permission.

It is needless to say that after her exertions, nature demanded a prolonged rest. Unable to walk farther she was carried by two Indians under military escort out of immediate danger, and lodged at the home of her friends, the Turneys. In taking her hence she was safely borne over the same stream she had crossed, unaided, earlier in the day.

("Jubilee History of Thorold.")

The distance covered by this historic walk has been variously estimated. The line direct from Queenston to De Cew's house would have been about 15 miles. In leaving the beaten paths and roads, in traversing the woods and swamps, and in covering as it were almost two sides of a triangle of which the straight route was the third, she lengthened her course. In his official certificate Lieut. Fitzgibbon estimated it at about 20 miles. And this long and tiresome journey was made within the short space of not more than five or six hours.*

It is not necessary to make more than an allusion to the sequel. Warned by our patriotic heroine, Fitzgibbon made proper disposal of his men. These consisted of forty-eight of his Rangers, sixteen troopers and the Indians, of whom not more than eighty were actually engaged. Thence ensued the fight in the Beechwoods or Beaver Dams, one of the most unique and interesting conflicts of the war. Partly by stratagem but largely through accurate marksmanship, the enemy under Boerstler, although numbering five to one, was checked, depleted in number and obliged to retreat. Placing his wounded in wagons, he, with

*See next page.

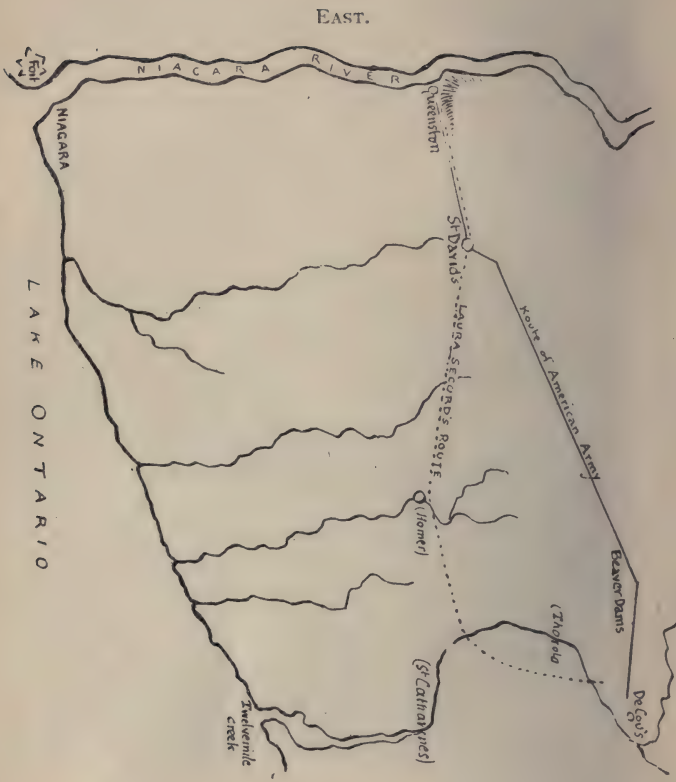

DIAGRAM OF HER ROUTE.

his artillery and infantry, made for a clearing on the summit of the ridge where the Americans, huddled together in David Miller's apple orchard, finally surrendered. Twenty-three officers and 487 non-commissioned officers and men of the U. S. Regular Army with thirty Militiamen laid down their arms. The colors of the 14th U. S. Infantry, two field pieces, two baggage wagons and 500 stand of arms also fell into our hands. The other losses to the enemy were thirty killed and seventy wounded. The loss on our side was fifteen Indians killed and twenty-five wounded. None of Fitzgibbon's Rangers seem to have been put hors de combat. No massacre stained the laurels of the fight.

("The Fight in the Beechwoods," *Cruikshank.*)

("The Story of Laura Secord," *Currie.*)

The consequences of this victory were very great. Whilst the Battle of Lundy's Lane remained to be fought on the historic peninsula and minor engagements were to take place completing his discomfiture, through this disaster the enemy lost his last real chance of winning Western Ontario. That the course of events turned out as it did was largely due to the patriotic zeal of a loyal-hearted woman.

This grand example of what Canadian womanhood has been and should be is too valuable to be allowed to fade away into the mists of the past. It is our desire to perpetuate the memory of our heroine for all time. It is believed that one of the best means of doing so is by the erection of a National Monument.

3—The Monument—What is it to be, and where is it to be erected ?

It is to be a *National* Monument, that is, one worthy of the nation, and erected by its citizens. It is not intended that the credit for the memorial shall be given solely to the U.E.L. Association of Ontario. The National Monument Committee, although at its inception constituted by that Association, is not restricted to any body of citizens. Provision is made in its constitution for the co-operation and representation of all patriotic citizens and Societies. A copy of the same will be mailed upon request.

Citizens, Societies or Committees subscribing $50 will have a permanent seat on said Committee, with, in the latter cases, an additional seat for every $50 additional subscribed. Those subscribing will be entitled to have their names enrolled on the scroll of honor which will be deposited when the foundation stone is laid. Societies or committees subscribing $100 or more will be mentioned on the monumental tablet.

It is suggested that Citizens' Committees to collect funds be organized in the several municipalities, said Committees to be affiliated with the General Committee.

The location chosen for the monument is Queenston. The reasons for the selection are as follows :—

(*a*) As being close by the scene where our heroine saved her husband's life.

(*b*) The starting-point of her great walk which in

all probability was largely instrumental in saving Upper Canada to the Empire.

(*c*) The place which identified her (our heroine) and her gallant husband with Sir Isaac Brock, our slain General, who is hailed as the hero of Upper Canada. It was her husband who helped to carry the General from the field of battle. It was near if not in her home that the dead hero lay.

(*d*) Easy accessibility by boat and rail, Queenston being on the line of travel used in the summer months by many thousands.

These considerations, in our opinion, easily entitle Queenston to take precedence of any other locality as the site for a National Monument.

The cost of the monument will, of course, depend upon the people's response to our appeal. It is to be hoped, and it is confidently expected, that the people, especially the women of Canada, will respond to our call, and thus tend to perpetuate as an object lesson for all future generations the patriotic example of this noble-hearted woman.

R. E. A. LAND, *President of Committee.*

A. C. CASSELMAN, *Secretary.*

Women who have contributed monographs, sketches or stories whereby the deeds of Laura Secord have become more widely known :

Mrs. S. A. Curzon, "The Story of Laura Secord."
Emma A. Currie, "The Story of Laura Secord."
Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon, "A Veteran of 1812."
Matilda (Lady) Edgar, "Ten Years of Peace and War."
Miss Janet Carnochan.
Mrs. Mary M. Dunn.

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